



United States Department of the Interior



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Instruction Memorandum No. AK-300-2004-018
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To: All Employees

From: Manager, Alaska Fire Service
Field Manager, Northern Field Office

Subject: Work Related Injury and Illness

Purpose: This memorandum explains what your rights, responsibilities, and benefits are under the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), if you have a work-related injury or illness.

Policy/Action: Management of work-related injury and illness is governed by the Federal Employee's Compensation Act and the policies stated in BLM's, Managing Human Resources, Office of Workers' Compensation Manual.

The Department of Labor, OWCP, administers the Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA), a law that provides benefits for federal civilian employees, emergency firefighters and official volunteers. OWCP and BLM designate agency Compensation Specialists to help you report your work-related injury or illness and obtain benefits.

Designated Compensation Specialists

If you work for the Northern Field Office, your Compensation Specialist is Douglas Carpenter; Susan Will provides back-up. If you work in an Alaska Fire Service (AFS) remote Zone, your Zone Administrative Assistant is your Compensation Specialist. An incident Finance Section may act as Compensation Specialist if you are on assignment. For all other AFS personnel, Financial Services (FS) provides Compensation Specialist services. In addition, FS supports the other Compensation Specialists and has the role of OWCP Coordinator for Northern BLM personnel.

OWCP Coverage

In general, you are covered by OWCP if you are injured while in performance of duty, or if you have a disease caused by your employment. However, your benefits depend upon your timely reporting of the occurrence. In addition, medical documentation must support the relationship of your injury or condition, to your employment. Covered conditions fall into two categories: Traumatic Injury (injury) or Occupational Disease (illness.)

Reporting an Injury or Illness

You must verbally notify your supervisor within one working day of the injury or illness. Appropriate OWCP forms should be completed within three work days to document the occurrence and must be completed within ten days of the injury or illness if requesting medical treatment. If you don't have a form, ask your supervisor to provide one or request assistance from your Compensation Specialist. Give a complete, accurate description of the circumstances. Good examples of injury and illness documentation are shown below.

- **Traumatic Injury** - Use form CA-1 to report an injury. An injury is defined as a wound, or other condition of the body caused by external force, including stress or strain, in one specific event or incident, or by a series of events or incidents, **that occurs during a calendar day or one work shift**. You must be able to identify what, when, where, how and why the injury happened.

Injury/Part of Body	Date/Time	What/How/Where Did It Happen?
laceration, right thumb	9/15/XX 1000	I sewed into my thumb while operating a sewing machine to construct a fire pack, in Parachute Loft, Building 1513
sprain, left knee	7/04/XX 1800	I tripped over a log while hiking in for initial attack of fire A6BR, Military Zone
sprain, left elbow	8/24/XX 1400	I felt pain after four hours of pulling brush to construct fish weir, Hoosier Creek

- **Occupational Disease** - Use form CA-2 to report an occupational disease. This is defined as an illness, disease or condition that **develops over a period longer than one work day or shift**. Causes of illness may include repeated stress or strain, systemic infection, and exposure to toxins, poisons, fumes and Blood-borne Pathogens (BBPO). If you don't know what caused a condition, it is classified as an illness and reported on form CA-2.

Illness/Part of Body	Date/Time	What/How/Where Did It Happen?
strain, lower back	6/28/XX to 6/30/XX	I felt pain, stiffness, after loading 1000 lbs. of archaeological objects onto aircraft at Mesa Site, AK
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, left wrist	6/15/XX to 7/05/XX	Numbness began in my fingers during 21 days of sawyer duties on Hotshot crew, fire A3DC, AK; pain spread to left wrist
kidney infection	9/01/XX to 9/15/XX	Doctor diagnosis shows I developed a kidney infection due to dehydration, long hours and stress while assigned as Incident Dispatcher on fire A4NA, NV

Medical Benefits and Care

Requirements for obtaining initial medical treatment at government expense are different for injury and illness.

- **Treatment for Injury** - In an emergency situation, your supervisor may give verbal authorization for medical treatment. Payment for medical expenses is not automatic or open-ended, as only a designated Compensation Specialist may issue the OWCP form, Authorization for Medical Treatment, CA-16. The CA-16 covers payment for initial care only.

- **Treatment for Illness** - Only OWCP can authorize treatment for illness. If you believe you have a work-related illness, you must provide medical evidence of the condition, and explain its relationship to a condition of your employment or your work environment. OWCP may take six months to review the medical documentation and ask for more information before adjudicating your claim. In the meantime, it is your responsibility to pay the medical bills. If your claim is accepted, you can claim reimbursement from OWCP, and you may be eligible for other benefits. If the condition is not accepted, you won't receive reimbursement or benefits.

Agency Provided Medical Care (APMC)

APMC can be used to pay for medical care for certain incident-related injuries or illnesses. APMC costs are charged to the incident. APMC requirements are outlined in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook. APMC doesn't limit your right to file an OWCP claim, and all reporting requirements still apply. FS coordinates the use of APMC for BLM-managed incidents. The State of Alaska does not utilize APMC on state-managed incidents. Some lower 48 incidents will use APMC.

Delayed Reporting of an Injury or Illness

OWCP will question your claim if you don't report it promptly and will investigate your claim if you wait 30 days before obtaining a diagnosis. You, your supervisor, and your doctor may have to provide additional documentation. You will be responsible for medical treatment costs until OWCP accepts the claim.

Injuries and Illnesses in Travel Status

You must first report the occurrence to your on-site supervisor and complete the required forms. Ask the incident Finance Section, local Compensation Specialist, or other administrative contact for assistance. You are responsible for following local procedures for obtaining and paying for medical treatment, including APMC.

If you sustain a traumatic injury requiring medical treatment while in travel status, and will not be returning to your duty station within ten days, you should obtain treatment authorization from the incident Finance Section or local Compensation Specialist. Medical treatment cannot be authorized by the home unit Compensation Specialist after ten days.

Upon return to your Duty Station, discuss the injury with your supervisor, and contact FS. You are responsible for sending or bringing all original forms to your supervisor. The supervisor reviews the documentation and forwards the forms to FS.

Time Loss

A lost time injury is one in which any time during an employee's regular Tour of Duty is coded to other than hours code 010, after the date of injury. You must use other than 010, regular hours, for doctor's visits, physical therapy or other medical procedures that occur during normal business hours. You may be eligible for benefits if you have a lost time injury. You are not required by either OWCP or BLM to claim time loss benefits. You can request Sick or Annual Leave without losing your other OWCP benefits, your right to medical treatment, or payment of medical expenses.

Return to Work Program

BLM reduces medical and pay compensation costs by providing timely medical treatment, and returning the injured worker to full duty as quickly as possible. If your doctor restricts your duties, your supervisor will modify them, assign other duties within your office, or coordinate with other BLM offices to find appropriate work elsewhere within BLM. The work will be offered to you in writing, on a Restricted Duty Assignment Offer (RDAO). Your future benefits depend on whether

you accept or refuse the RDAO. The Return to Work Program only applies to accepted traumatic injury and occupational illness.

If you are under work restrictions for a work-related injury or accepted illness, you must continue medical treatment until you are released to full duty.

Benefits for A Work-Related Injury

Long term benefits depend on many factors, including the severity of an injury and availability of restricted duty. Every covered injury is eligible for the benefits below.

- **Continuation of Pay (COP)** - The leave category used to attend doctor and physical therapy appointments, surgical procedures, or while on total or partial disability, per doctor's orders. You must report your injury promptly and begin to lose time within 45 days. You have up to 45 calendar days (partial days are counted) of COP, which is paid at your regular salary rate, just like Sick or Annual Leave.
- **Pay Compensation (PC)** - If you lose time from work after expiration of COP, or if BLM can't provide restricted duty, you may apply for PC. Code your timesheet to Leave Without Pay (LWOP), Hours Code 162, FECA/OWCP, and file form CA-7 with FS. OWCP issues payment for PC and BLM is "charged back" for the cost. PC is not subject to income tax. Leave accrual is prorated when you are in FECA/OWCP status.

Benefits for Work-Related Illness

Benefits are different for illness. You can't use COP for an illness, even if OWCP has accepted your claim. If you lose time due to an accepted illness, you may decide between two compensation benefits.

- **Pay Compensation (PC)** - You can choose to code your lost time to LWOP, and claim PC, as with an injury claim.
- **Leave Repurchase** - If you have used Sick or Annual leave to compensate for time loss, you may choose to "buy back" leave. You must coordinate leave repurchase with FS, OWCP and the payroll office.

Summary of Responsibilities

Many individuals and offices have responsibilities when someone is injured or becomes ill on the job. Refer to the summary below, and post Attachment 1, Guide to Injury and Illness Forms and Responsibilities, in your workplace.

- **Workers** - Notify your supervisor within one work day of the injury or illness. Complete the appropriate forms within three work days. Request medical treatment within ten days, contact your Compensation Specialist for authorization. Return medical treatment forms to FS within one work day to enable FS to determine duty restrictions and payment responsibility. Record time loss on your T & A.
- **Supervisors** - Refer the employee to the appropriate Compensation Specialist if medical treatment is needed. Investigate the accident, ensure time loss is accurately recorded on the T & A, and complete the supervisory section of the appropriate form. Notify FS promptly and complete required Safety Management Information System (SMIS) entry. Review medical treatment forms and if duty is restricted, coordinate assignment of restricted duties with FS to ensure completion of RDAO within 3 work days.
- **Safety Officer** - Manage the SMIS program to ensure all reported injuries, illnesses and accidents are entered. Assess injury reports, identify trends, and work with supervisors to determine prevention methods. Manage the Exposure Incident program for Blood Borne Pathogens or other hazards.
- **Compensation Specialist** - Authorize medical treatment for injuries that are promptly and properly reported. Provide information on claim procedures for reported illness.

- Coordinate with FS.
- **Financial Services (FS)** - Act as Compensation Specialist, provide support to other Compensation Specialists and provide the point of contact and coordination of benefits with OWCP. Manage the official agency case files, track lost time, and audit charges for OWCP services. Administer the Return to Work Program and manage long-term claims.
- **Timekeepers:** Verify time loss due to the injury (COP, PC, LWOP, etc.) is properly coded on the T & A's and submit copies of the T & A's to FS at the end of each pay period.

Additional Information

Every employee is responsible for knowing their rights and responsibilities for work-related injury or illness, and for applying the information in this IM.

If you want to learn more, you can read the BLM Human Resources Management publication, "Office of Workers' Compensation Program Guide," and/or FECA in 20 CFR Chapter 10, Part A.

Time Frame: This IM is effective immediately.

Contact: Technical assistance for all Northern BLM employees is available by calling the Financial Services Team at 907-356-5780.

Signed by:
Scott Billing
Manager, AFS

Robert W. Schneider
Field Manager, NFO

Authenticated by:
Shirley Goforth
Records

Attachment
Guide to Injury/Illness Forms Chart (1 p)

Distribution:
AK-020

